

ACE Quick Guide to Coherence

An element of a good paragraph is coherence. This means the **parts of your paragraph link to each other in a logical way** so the reader can easily follow the progression of your ideas.

Developing a **coherent argument** and position in academic writing is often done in the **planning** and **editing stages**.

In your assignments, **try these four strategies to achieve coherence**:

1. Use consistent pronouns for clarity

Pronouns can be used as cohesive devices, to lessen misunderstandings and strengthen links with what has already been said. Notice the changes the writer makes for consistency in the following example:

Incorrect: European citizens enjoy many civil rights and freedoms; **we** can travel and speak relatively freely. **They** can also criticise **our** government without negative repercussions.

Correct: European citizens enjoy many civil rights and freedoms; **they** can travel and speak relatively freely. **They** can also criticise **their** government without negative repercussions.

(Adapted from Queen's University, 2023)

2. Use reference words to refer back and forward in your paragraph

To avoid repeating words and phrases many times, we use cohesive devices to make references to other parts of a text, such as:

The 2019 General Election shifted the political landscape in the UK with the Labour Party falling to its weakest electoral position in almost a century (Eardley, 2019) and the Conservative Party gaining their largest majority since 1987 (Mattinson, 2020). This was an historic defeat because...

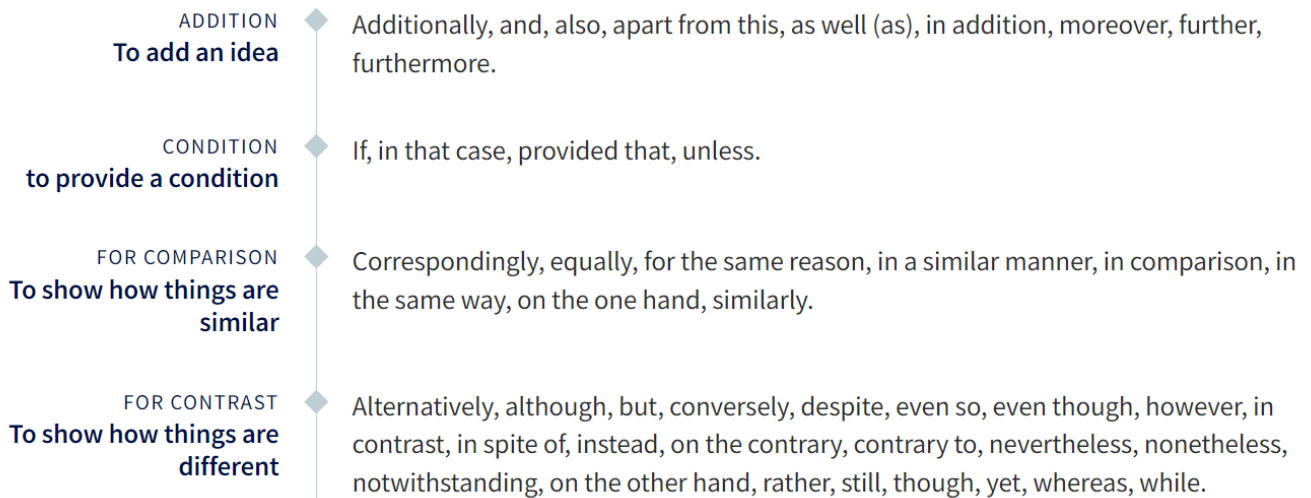
- **Its** – refers back to Labour Party
- **Their** – refers to the Conservative Party
- **This** – refers to the Conservative Party's largest majority since 1987

(Adapted from Hooper, 2023)

3. Use transition signals to guide your reader from one idea to the next

Transition words and phrases (also called linking or connecting words) are used to link together different ideas in your text. They help the reader follow your arguments by expressing the relationships between different sentences or parts of a sentence.

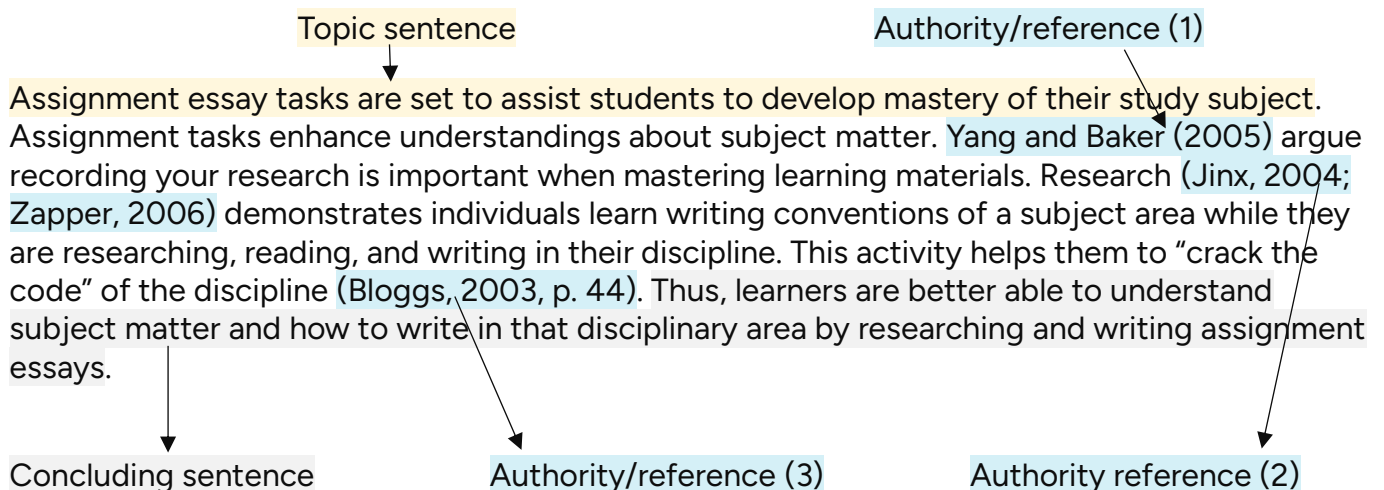
Example: Several researchers have previously explored this topic. For instance, Smith (2014) examined the effects of...



(The University of Melbourne, no date)

4. Arrange your ideas in logical order

Organising sentences in your paragraph according to a logical order helps the reader follow the development of your ideas. You can order your ideas by adopting the following structure: topic sentence, supporting evidence, and concluding sentence. For example:



(Adapted from Silpakorn University 2022)

Other typical orders include:

<i>Chronological order</i>	<i>Comparison/contrast</i>
<i>Order of importance</i>	<i>Cause and effect</i>

Each kind of order uses particular words and phrases (transition words) to show the relationships between ideas. Below are several types of writing and common transitions used with them:

Chronology	Comparison	Contrast	Additional Information	Examples	Cause & Effect	Concluding Ideas
Before	Likewise	However	And	For	Therefore	In conclusion
After	Compared to	On the other hand	Also	example	Though	In summary
Next	Similarly		In addition	In general	As/As a result	Finally
Since	As as	But/yet	In fact	Generally	Since	Therefore
First, second	And	In spite of/ In contrast	Furthermore	For instance	Because	To conclude
While		Although	Moreover	In particular		To summarise
When		Instead	Another....	Specifically		
			Is/was			

Reference List

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Additional Resources

The [ACE Academic Writing Essentials](#) provides advice on some of the key principles of academic writing.



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